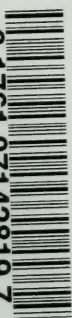


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THE
JULIAN ASHTON
BOOK

*This Edition is limited
to 600 Copies.*



PLATE I.

*An Afternoon Walk,
Watercolour.
In the possession of the
National Gallery of N.S.W.*

ArtP
A

Ashton, Julian Rossi
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THE JULIAN ASHTON BOOK



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INTRODUCTION.

AFTER forty years of invaluable service in the cause of art in Australia, Mr. Julian Ashton is compelled by failing health to give up active work as a painter. Some of his friends thought the time opportune for making a practical demonstration of the regard in which he is held by a large circle of colleagues and art lovers in Sydney. There seems no good reason why such a tribute should not be paid in the artist's lifetime. The long and disinterested efforts of Mr. Ashton have already borne fruit in the greater public appreciation of art now shown in Australia. A number of his pupils have risen to eminence in the world of art, and, what is most interesting, some of them in recent years have won recognition and a fair reward for their work without leaving this country. The way of all future artists in Australia has been made easier by the labours of Julian Ashton.

The form of memorial decided upon was that of an exhibition of the principal works of his lifetime, either loaned by the purchasers or borrowed from Mr. Ashton. In order to enhance the interest of the exhibition, Mr. Ashton has, at the request of the committee, consented to lend his Australian collection which he has been slowly making by purchase, exchange or presentation during the last twenty five years.

It was also considered that at the same time a small volume such as this should be published in order to record the impression made by Julian Ashton's personality upon his contemporaries, and to reproduce some typical examples of his work as a painter.

The Committee formed to carry out these purposes consists of Mr. C. Lloyd Jones (Chairman), Hon. W. A. Holman, M.L.A., Miss Rose Scott, Sir Samuel Hordern, Messrs. George Robertson, Elliott Gruner and Hal Eyre; Sydney Ure Smith and Bertram Stevens (Hon. Secretaries).

THE PERSONALITY OF JULIAN ASHTON

BY NORMAN LINDSAY.

IT seems to me that we arrive best at understanding the value of a friend by striving to realize what life would have been to us without him.

There is no great difficulty in compiling the long list of those who could be gratefully done without. Chance rules this heterogeneous acquaintanceship, and the accident that deflected us to it might just as well have carried us elsewhere, for all its effect on our destiny. That brass-armed lady can have had little to do with so haphazard a proceeding, but where the stimulus of a friend is deep and abiding, we must insist that Destiny herself brought us to this friendship.

It is perhaps a small issue that I, personally, could not conceive exactly what life might have been without my long friendship with Julian Ashton. But it is important to try and realize what this generation would be without the stimulus of such a personality.

In this relation I am not going to apologise for bestowing on myself Julian Ashton's friendship. It may seem a poor expedient to arrive at another by talking about oneself, but it is just because of the fine temper of Julian Ashton's mind that the road to him lies through the hearts and minds of those about him.

Only a master personality can attract about it the more vital impulses of its generation. Life has so much to do with the impress of mind on mind, that we only begin to find ourselves by the reflection of our personality in others, just as we gain vitality by our power to absorb vitality from other minds.

And I am sure that what Julian Ashton meant to me in stimulus and encouragement he meant to many others. Over a long and active life he has been always in touch with the dawning impulse of his generation to seek plastic beauty, which is man's symbol for all higher expression of himself.

Whatever was sincere in the desire to express beauty gravitated naturally to Julian Ashton. His life and work have placed him at the most serious juncture in the life of youth, when ideas are in the melting pot, and an alchemist of experience is needed to extract gold from the gross matter of our muddled aspirations.



PLATE II.

The Bathers.
Oil Painting,
1914.

And no man knew better how to point the road in a moment of indecision. We all know that Julian Ashton is a born leader of men. But he is something a great deal more subtle than that: he is a born father-confessor to the ideality of youth. I do not know any higher evidence of his generosity and modesty of soul than this, which made him the kindest and most patient listener to the stuttering gabble of our immaturity.

Others have written here of Ashton's work; but what he expressed as a personal vision in Art is only half the work of his life. We know its sincerity, and can measure something of its value as an example to the later effort. But the stimulus of that other half, which is the man himself, we can only measure vaguely by its long sustained effect upon ourselves.

To speak of it personally, I should have to become arrogantly autobiographical; I should have to begin with the encouraging letter he wrote me long ago in Melbourne, which brought me to Sydney, and to the enduring effect of his friendship. I wish I could, in all modesty, give my experience of the kindly and sympathetic friend as an example of how much he must have meant to others, since he meant so much to me.

My case, perhaps, was tinged with a special need for some such trenchant friendship. A boy, harassed by the mental rebellion of youth; seeking expression amidst the difficulties of expression; and, moreover, seeking it amidst the roaring of moral lions, is in a sad plight if he cannot find one with the authority of years to offer a little encouragement. Whether the windy rebellion of youth, or the equally windy roaring of moral lions, are matters of serious importance need not be considered.

What is important is that mind, young or old, should express itself, whatever the nature of its expression; since human development depends not upon little formulae for Art and Life, as our moral lions demand, but upon our eternally re-sifting the material of human life, in order that man should be made aware of the problems of his destiny on earth. And this, well or ill, we strive to do by Art. It is not in the record of his affairs, but in the record of his passions and ideals that man arrives from animality. It is by keeping alive the individual expression of mind that consciousness is generated in other minds; and this, first of all serious problems, has been the guiding impulse of Julian Ashton's life.

I still remember one splendid specimen of the moral genus bellowing before a humble effort of mine : " Oh the pity of it, the pity of it ! " in a final crescendo of pity that the police did not tear this offensive thing from the public gaze. What Julian said to *him*, modesty forbears me to repeat. He has the art of an effective rejoinder, which has reduced many a lion to the meek demeanour of a sheep. What he must have put up with on my account in those days makes a debt of friendship alone, but the interest and encouragement he gave to all fresh effort was the larger debt that I, and all my kind, still owe him.

Again I repeat, I use myself only as the indication of how much others owe him, too. All his life, he has fought the battle of others. His championship has not been only for the struggling impulse of youth to express its vision of life, but for the larger humanity that strives to bring light to the dark places of its generation.

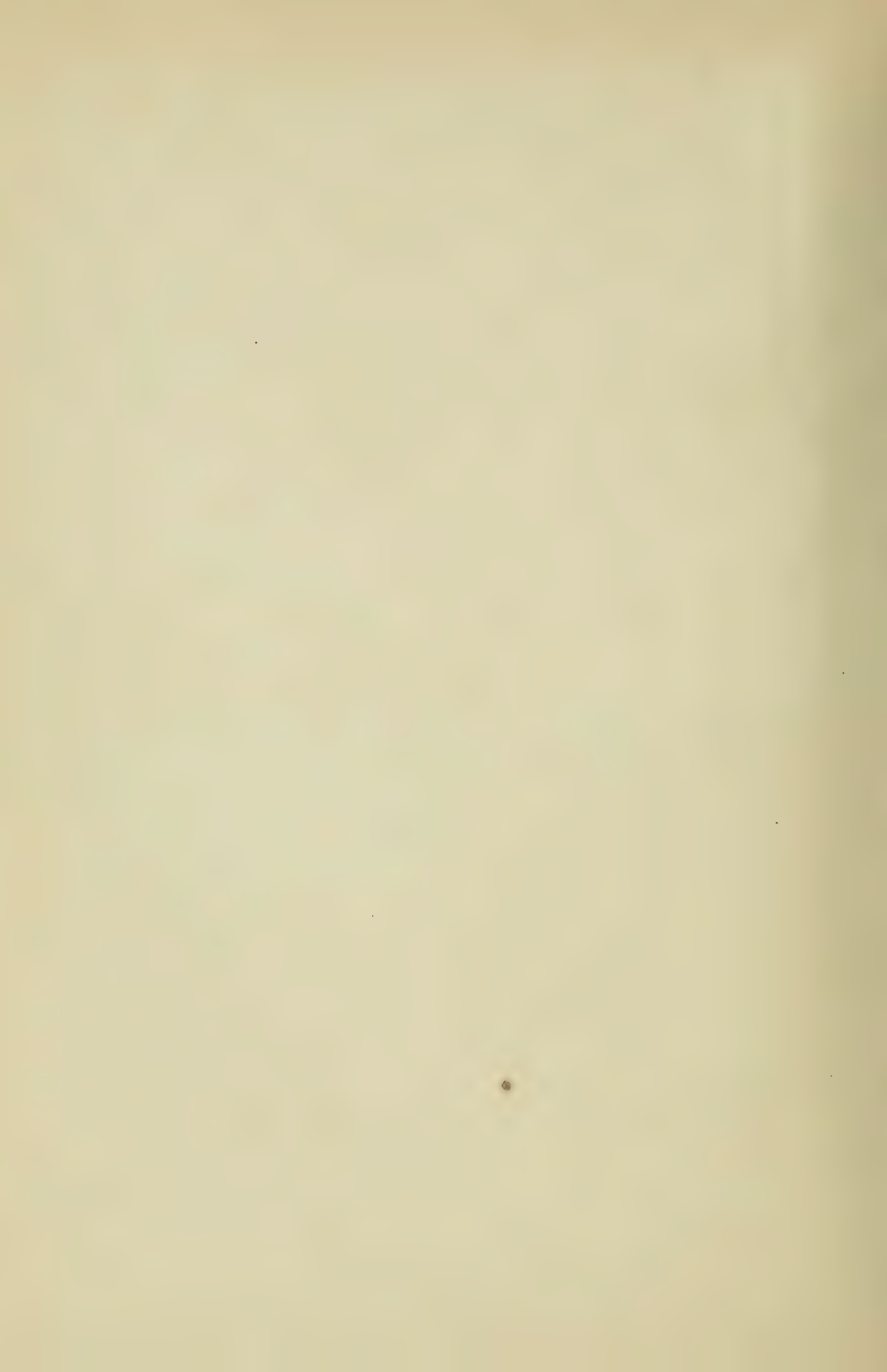
We may all hesitate to define what Art is ; but Julian Ashton is gifted with a special insight in divining what Art is *not*. I never knew him at fault in the presence of a false standard of value. His generosity may have led him to see more in an immature effort than was there ; but where the effort was sincere his divination always led him to discover it.

The student who came to him was never tied down to academic formulae. He was taught to see form and use material, certainly, and taught with unflagging industry. But the impress of Julian Ashton's teaching was always to force an individual expression ; to arrive at the universal symbol of beauty by the individual outlook. One has only to look down the long list of young minds which arrived through him to see how strongly the individual vision was taught to find itself. It may seem a small piece of personal egotism to protest that but for Julian Ashton, my own early efforts would seldom have found wall-space in our annual exhibitions. Certainly, I would not now advance a plea for the virtues of those works, since their technical deficiencies are thick upon them ; but, nevertheless, I still wonder mildly at the exasperation they aroused. " Like to the moan of lions hurt to death " was the sound of moral agony that went up about them, and I have a sneaking conviction that not I but Julian Ashton withstood the uproar of that attack.



PLATE III.

The Golden Willows.
Watercolour.



It cannot be estimated—the stimulus of such a mind on the minds of those about it. Such benevolence of soul is only possible from one who has not only the will to give, but also the power to give. He has always seemed to me a man doubly vitalized; a superabundant energy and courage that added vitality to all in touch with him. It never mattered whether the problem before him was emotional or technical—the human heart or the human hand; he was always equally alive to its significance, and emphatic on the point of its larger issue.

No young mind could react from such a strong and generous spirit but to become better and stronger. In all that touched the merely human problem, whether it was youth in difficulties over love or money, his sympathy and help were always assured. But in all that touched the profounder problem of intellectual development, he preached with energy the only gospel of individual vision.

He implanted the belief that one must seek beauty as the expression of the inner vision, not as an academic formula. And one must find it in all that is human; in the basic passions of life. Such a belief goes beyond creeds, aesthetic or religious. It is governed by the inspiration which tells all higher minds that the road to whatever is Beyond is governed by what Life is on Earth.

Here Ashton's influence went always beyond the mere effect of connoisseurship and aestheticism, for the worst blight on all intellectual expression is that which narrows art down to the little problem of taste and decoration. For this, like its antithesis, the popular ideal in sentiment and morality, is a thing that exists as a parasite on past effort and sentiment. And we, inheriting the new century, are forced still to sustain all that was dead and damned in Victorian morality and Victorian materialism. A dark age, and not yet over. Even the devastating effect of a universal war has not cleared away its mean spirit of commercialism and utilitarianism. The money-grubber is still with us, doubtless, and always will be, since the belly rules by necessity our little existence on earth; but we no longer allow its priest and pander, the tradesman, to posit himself as the first of men. Already a shudder of suspicion has turned upon this self-imposed superman of the money market, who has revealed himself as the greatest danger to mankind.

In higher things than mere commercial affairs, there is a new spirit abroad ; a spirit that has divined some better ideal than that of merely filling its belly and clothing its back. Perhaps once again the world is learning that the way to self-development does not lie through the stock exchange, but by the power to experience emotion through the higher vision of thought and beauty.

With the coming of this new spirit, the young generation to-day has perhaps come into its inheritance. But let it not forget that if there is an audience ready to seek and appreciate its effort to express beauty, it is because of the few of the generation that went before, preaching the gospel we begin to see fulfilled to-day.

To understand what light we have now, we must hark back to the time when light was not. And there, perhaps, we will begin to see how much we owe to such a man as Julian Ashton. In truth, the Australia he arrived in was a place as spiritually dark as darkest Africa—a dreadful little dull provincial hole, filled with the vague clamour of politicians, to whom Art and all that it means of mental development was a thing as remote as the kingdom of Micomicon. It needed a strong spirit indeed to preach enlightenment to these dull-eyed primitives, and we can only wonder at the courage that upheld the preacher through those long years.

But he has lived to see a miracle in part accomplished. He has not only seen two generations of youth respond to the stimulus of his creed to seek truth as the vision finds it ; he has seen also the impulse to seek beauty spread from a little isolated group to take its place in the wider life of the community.

In short, he has seen Australia arrive from barbarism to the beginning of civilization, and we, who see the change too, know how much of it we owe to his long and sustained efforts.

How serious and important this arrival from savagery is, we can hardly expect to be understood in an age still given over to tribal politics. Nevertheless, the mystery of consciousness has been accomplished, even if those who respond can see no more in it than a sudden interest in pictures and music. One would like to add literature to the stimulus, but, alas, poets still starve in this country. Yet there is here an impulse that may in time arrive at an understanding of all that may be expressed by Sound, Form and Words, the three symbols of Mind, by which we record



PLATE IV.

The Smile.
Oil Painting,
1899.

the spiritual desire to realize Beauty on Earth, without which there is no destiny for man, either on earth or beyond it.

And I say that no man alive in this country to-day has fought harder for such a spiritual realization than Julian Ashton, and I wish our gratitude to him could be better expressed than by a few empty words, however sincerely uttered from the heart.

JULIAN ASHTON, THE TEACHER

Written on behalf of his Students by
GRACE CROWLEY.

WE who have known him regarded his punctuality as his only failing. In all the years during which he has taught, those were indeed rare days when we did not find him at his post. How well we remember the starting of work on those rare occasions! The class fell to work as usual; they were silent and, apparently, busy, but something was missing. It might, perhaps, be eleven or eleven-thirty when a thin, grey figure slipped silently into the room. Out of the corner of an eye we observe the rapid change into an old blazer, and the search for the inevitable pointer. Then: "Do you think the cavity of that eye is in its right place? See!" and the board was whisked from before the student's gaze and placed alongside its objective.

The work, the love, the enthusiasm which Julian Ashton has poured into the world of Australian art are appreciated by his brother artists; but we, his own students, claim a deeper and more intimate knowledge of one to whom the most gifted of these men so gratefully pay tribute. We have flinched under the lash of his criticism, and trembled at a word of praise.

In our daily privilege of working under a personality so rich in those human qualities which most warm and gladden the spirit—a brain so versatile, a memory retentive, a judgment unerring and swift, yet tempered with a large tolerance—we have been shaped and chiselled and trimmed and polished by a master-hand which, we cannot but know, loves its work; and in the hearts of many of us has been left the impression of unforgettable lessons.

A few of these talks and criticisms in the class we are bringing forward as material likely to be of interest to the art lovers of Sydney. Some of them are memories; some were jotted down on the spot, at random, in the class. Not without hesitation do we submit our treasures to public perusal, knowing that no printed word can give the force, spontaneity and charm which envelopes the personality of the speaker.

* * * *

"Drawing . . . why, the very essence of drawing is to put down concisely, in a few strokes, the very movement and life of your subject. Your first half-dozen lines should contain within

The Wave.
Oil Painting, 1900.



them the vital germ of your finished drawing."

"Draughtsmanship is accurate perception beautifully recorded . . ."

"Teaching drawing means helping you to see with certainty, and to place it on your paper with simple exactitude. If Michael Angelo came down from Heaven, that is all he could do for you. You say that you've 'drawn that all right, but a bit on the large side.' That 'bit' looks to me an inch-and-a-half, and I want you to observe within the variation of a line" . . .

"You ask how long it takes to learn to draw? Suppose you were apprenticed to a carpenter; you would be obliged to sign on for five years. During that time you would learn to boil glue, judge by their appearance the various woods; learn to use hammer, saw, chisel and plane with freedom; gauge with accuracy the shapes and sizes of the articles to be made, and probably pass a few months at simple sand-papering. Do you think you would be a carpenter then? By no manner of means; you would be what is called an 'improver,' and have to spend some years at practical work before you would be an acknowledged master of the craft. If it takes so long to be a carpenter, I will leave it to you to imagine how long it will take to become a draughtsman."

"What do you think of that skull? Now, I think it a beautiful shape, and your drawing makes it look like a thing any schoolboy of average intelligence could carve out of a turnip! If I can only get you to SEE, I can teach you how to draw. Why do I set you to draw a skull? Well, one day you may drift into the life-class where you will draw a living head; and unless you have some idea of the foundation upon which a head is built, you will make something like those pretty girls in a Christmas Supplement, who look as if they were stuffed with cotton wool. Now, when the draughtsman is brought face to face with the fact that the prettiest girl and the fattest baby are built upon a bony framework, he instinctively suggests this structural formation in his drawing." . . .

'You know, I am telling you in five minutes what it has taken me twenty years to learn. I don't expect you to understand it; but I will go on repeating it and repeating it until one bright day its meaning will dawn upon you.'" . . .

“That hand of yours does not look like a hand—it looks like a stuffed star-fish. Stand back and regard the two together; the hand in the cast curves inward. Do you think you’ve got that?”
Student: “No, but I will get it when I come to the shading.”
“Young man, you will never make a bad drawing look any better by putting in shading. Norman Lindsay could make that curve in with a line; so can you. The *great* draughtsman demands no more; it is the *indifferent* draughtsman who exclaims: ‘But wait till I come to the shading.’
A draughtsman is a man who, with a simple line, can express anything.”

Mr. F., if you saw that leg in the surf at Coogee you would go into ecstasies of laughter.”

“Have you got the angle at which the model sits in that chair? Let me hold it alongside for you, and stand back against the wall. Look quickly from one to the other, backwards and forwards. What do you think?”
Student: “The angle at which she sits is all wrong.”
“I’m glad we agree. It’s much better that the guilty should plead guilty before their own tribunal; but see what a ticklish thing criticism is. If you had brought that drawing to my room and showed it to me, I should have said it was a good drawing; but when I see what you’ve done alongside what you’re trying to do I must pronounce it bad, because it has ignored the very essence and spirit—the poise and movement—of the model.”

“Yes, the proportions are not bad, but your line looks like a piece of Berlin wool.”

“The actual *line* that you use can be a beautiful thing, expressing both form and colour. Take a fresh piece of paper, and, with your brain at the edge of your charcoal, see what you can give me in a simple, direct and sensitive line.”

(*Beautiful little girl model on stand*). “Drawing so out of proportion as to be almost beyond criticism.”

(*A moment’s silence*). “Tommo, in the fullness of time you may have children of your own. Let us hope none of them will be like that.”

Tommo, *fervently*: “Indeed, I hope not, Sir.”

“Tone is the truthful relation of the colours of your picture or the shades in your drawing to the highest possible light. To



PLATE VI.

*Howard Ashton,
at ten months old.
Oil Painting.
Painted in London, 1878.*

suggest this the artist has for oil-painting white-lead ; for water-colour or drawing, the white of his paper. The sub-conscious recollection of this fact induces a restraint which we call tone."

"Don't you think the neck of that bottle too dark ; and the back-ground up against it, isn't that too light ? There, you see, you set your theme and come crashing down on the wrong chords to start with, and everyone clasps their hands to their ears, and calls out 'Good God, STOP !' "

"Yes, very correct, but not a bit interesting ! It looks as though you'd had a good breakfast, come down here leisurely, got your things together, lit your pipe and said : 'Well, I've got all the morning to block this thing in ; what's the hurry ?' If that's your attitude you'll never paint . . . never . . . never . . . never !"

"If you're going to make that thing *live* you must have *fire* in your inside. You must feel that at the end of your brush your very heart's blood is running out."

"What made you choose that subject ? Why did you think it beautiful ? That's what you want to think of."

"It is when you feel that every touch is vital—that you take your brush and lay on the paint with the object of leaving it . . . that for the time being the joy of living is running like quicksilver through your veins. That's the work that tells. At the end of those two hours you may say : 'Well, I'm dead beat, but I've had a lovely time.' "

"Those hands are like a bunch of bananas, and pretty ugly ones at that."

"Take care what sort of line you use on the satiny texture of that girl's skin. You should give me the suggestion of *flesh*, not a pair of striped pyjamas."

"Well, what do you think of it ?" . . . *Student* : "Oh, I don't know." . . . "I'll tell you what I think : It's like the beginning of the world—without form and void."

"Your drawing looks as though a timid spider had crawled over the paper. You want, here and there, when you observe a trenchant line, to say 'Ha,' and put it down with the force that you see it."

(*Comment on drawing of the anatomical figure*):—

"Humph ! Looks as though he'd swallowed a balloon for his dinner."

"This picture is another step ahead in the progress this artist is making. It is tackled freely, and the variety of method with which the paint is put on is most interesting, for, after all, the way the paint is laid on to the canvas is an extremely important thing. At first the student is apt to be so engrossed in getting the purity of colour and the truth of tone, that he does not consider how best to lay it on. Do you remember that picture in the National Gallery called 'The Anatomy Class.' In the foreground is a red-headed young man leaning forward and resting his hands on the top of his umbrella. Seen from a short distance the hands look like meaningless daubs of paint; but stand back, and they are flesh and blood."

"Your water-colour of those roses is common, because of your want of observance of the delicate edges against the background. Its lack of subtlety of colour cries aloud for condemnation." . . .

"Before Beauty the student should whisper—w-h-i-s-p-e-r, like that; not shout."

"I've seen brilliant pumpkins, but it seems to me that you might have used your colour with more reserve. However, God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. He *might* have made a pumpkin as brilliant as that."

"Lay on your paint with the object of leaving it; don't touch it again. There you go; there you go. It's like a pimple on your nose—you can't help scratching it!" . . . *Student*: "But I intended to come over that." . . . "Yes; but why make mistakes in order to come over them? I am trying to get you to see and put things down *at once*; to strain every nerve in your body, so that, with unerring precision, you place unhesitatingly on your canvas exactly your right colour, exactly your right value, in exactly the right place. See? You may sweat drops of blood in the execution, but the onlooker must feel that the work is not only beautiful but full of joy."

"Too big!" . . . *Student*: "I don't think so." . . . "Don't you think it too long?" . . . *Student*: "No." "Stand back, and let me take it over here. Now do you think it too big?" *Student*: "No; it looks to me about right." . . . "Well, go down on your bended knees, man, and pray to God for better eyesight."

"Each student must have his or her own original way of



PLATE VII.

The Hon. Henry Gullett, M.L.C.
Oil Painting, 1900.

handling the pencil to make it retain its interest for any length of time. In Art, as in Life, it is monotony that kills."

"The one object of Art is to get pleasure out of it."

"So long as you have enough food for the day and sufficient clothes to prevent the police from running you in, what more do you want? Rembrandt, at the close of his glorious life, was so poor that he probably wiped his brushes on the slack of his wide Dutch breeches because he could not afford paint rag."

"He painted himself an innumerable number of times, quite likely because he could not afford models. As far as the good things of this world goes he died a beggar, but the supreme joy of creation was with him to the last."

"'Twenty guineas for a Grüner, which only took him two hours to paint!' . . . Aren't you forgetting the twenty years that it took Mr. Grüner to discipline his eye and his hand in the production of that beautiful sketch?"

"Day after day, month after month, year after year, the great artist pours all the forces of his will into the finding of some sure and beautiful means of expression which shall realize his inner vision. At long last he achieves a sort of glorified shorthand, which, through careful imitation, has become subtle suggestion. I think that it reflects credit on a public that willingly pays twenty guineas for such a sketch."

"'The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.' Yes, but the nimblest spirit has no means of expression except through the discipline of the letter. Every good teacher knows this; it's the indifferent teacher who mistakes the means for the end."

"'Master! Master! give us a sign,' was the cry of the disciples of old, and the art student of to-day still imagines that the master carries some magic recipe for all the problems which surround him. Will you understand that a Truth once formulated almost ceases to be a truth. Art refuses to be bound by formulae, and therein lies her chiefest appeal. It is not the thing itself, but the individuality that reflects it, which makes artistry so varied and so full of charm."

JULIAN ASHTON

BY W. HARDY WILSON.

ONE day during the war, a dignified General alighted from a train at Menangle, where the Light-Horse Camp was then established. He was received with salutes from soldiers and reverences from railway officials.

Outside the gate of the station-yard an immaculate carriage, in charge of an orderly, awaited him.

As he crossed the yard, passengers on the train were filled with awe at the majesty of his advance. When he had almost reached the gate, a white hen with chickens entered his path and, growing alarmed at his approach, retreated to a position immediately in front of the gate-latch. The General threatened the hen with his cane, but she would not budge. He shooed, but she advanced and placed him on the defensive. He tried strategy, and she refused to be turned away. The position became exasperating. He could not follow an impulse to charge, because public opinion on the train would side with the hen if he happened to hurt her or one of her chickens, and she was his match in tactics.

In this dilemma he appealed to the orderly, who descended from the carriage and, to the amusement of onlookers, drove the hen away. Thus the General regained his dignity.

Now if we substitute Political Control of Art affairs in New South Wales for the General, replace the orderly with the Royal Art Society, and turn that hen into a fighting-cock in the person of Julian Ashton, and the chickens into artists or, if you like, into art, we have a fairly true picture of Julian Ashton defending art—a young and somewhat helpless art—from contempt, misunderstanding and ignominy; and Public Opinion, which protected the hen, has saved Julian Ashton from being swept out of the way.

It is as a fighter, the champion of art, that Julian Ashton figures in the eyes of most persons. He loves a fight; and he is always on the side of the weak against the strong, for fine thinking against vulgarity, for beauty against ugliness; and, like that hen, he has often proved a nuisance, but the paths he bars



PLATE VIII.

The Awakening,
Oil Painting, 1902.

are never those of progress. Over and over again, gathering deputations of artists around him, he has faced Minister after Minister at the Department of Education, and the Ministers, knowing nothing of art, would be wondering what was amiss with their strange visitors.

Turn now to the President on the platform at the Society of Artists' exhibitions and in the columns of the press. In outspoken words, careless of self-interest, he preaches with infinite zest that art shall prevail; denounces the dullards in high places who despise beauty; spurns the insidious hand that holds forth rewards in return for docility; rouses discontent where, with a smug face, satisfaction would linger, and with fearless audacity confounds his aggressors with the truth about themselves. And all so that art shall be honoured in the land, and the people find pleasure in the beautiful.

Not so long ago, finding himself compelled for health's sake to sojourn on the hills overlooking the domes that shelter art and wine within the city called the Pacific Pearl, Julian Ashton invited me to a talk with Lionel Lindsay at the latter's home. There we gossiped in the shade of a leafy turpentine, expounding views on the vicissitudes of art in Australia. "For thirty years and more," said Julian Ashton, "I have written and talked that the populace might learn to understand and love beautiful works; now the time has come when other hands must bear the torch."

With such fire, hope and devotion were these words uttered that one felt that this valiant soul was filled with perennial youth and effectiveness.

Nevertheless, the spectacle of Julian Ashton, toiling all those years, urged by his great passion for art and his great love for Australia, was, for me, distressing. I felt an unutterable sadness. Here was an organiser, a clear thinker, far-sighted, fired with tremendous zeal to serve art and the country he loved with a patriot's enthusiasm, and all this goodness and ability had been met with ceaseless opposition. The man that would have made an excellent Minister for the Fine Arts obstructed in well-nigh every move that he urged for his country's good; and that the moves he urged were for his country's good is an opinion shared by every artist on this continent who has the feeling for the beautiful in his soul.

For the most part, Julian Ashton's thirty years and more of writing and preaching proved a thankless task; yet he has never wavered and to this day his enthusiasm is undaunted. I know no man who loves Australia more generously than he. Patriot, Statesman, Painter, I would write of him and, for the life of me, I cannot tell in which sphere to place him first. But here we are concerned with the Painter.

When Julian Ashton comes to see me and looks at my work, who so helpful with technical criticism? "More weight here; a little lighter there," are the comments he makes; and I know no painter so ready to disclose where beauty is amiss. And the joy of it! Himself filled with the eagerness of youth, he kindles enthusiasm in the minds of artists who try and fail and try again. His enthusiasm shames us, one and all. Shall I give you a little picture of his enthusiasm? There may be difficulties with the Censor. "Confounded sentiment," he will be saying. Well, it is sentiment and sentiment that I, for one, admire. Here is the picture and you can judge for yourself.

The 1918 Society of Artists' Exhibition was being arranged on the walls. Half-a-dozen or more members of the committee were engaged in putting up this picture, then that, endeavouring to make a pleasant pattern with works that proved too big or too small, too vivid or too quiet to hang agreeably together. This effort soon becomes tedious, and with perhaps half the pictures, hung, a feeling of depression steals over the workers. Alas! the show cannot be as beautiful as one imagined. An illusion has flown to the next exhibition. One by one the artists seek the panels of their own work, where, in melancholy detachment, they strive to recover a little of their lost enthusiasm.

Amongst the workers was Julian Ashton. For the first time his work was not on the walls; he could no longer see to paint. He saw the others arranging their panels, and he rejoiced; he saw their enthusiasm in the show wane, and his grew stronger. None were so eager as he to place each picture in a fair setting; none so tireless in making a show that would lead onward. His great heart revelled in the work; and as he toiled it seemed to me that this, his empty year, was rich in that which men honour.



PLATE IX

Boats,
Watercolour, 1916.
In the possession of
Mrs. B. Job, Sydney.

We missed his pictures that sorrowful year, and we shall always miss them. The helpfulness, the splendid enthusiasm, the audacity of the man still spurs us on, but the pleasure we had each year in his panels has ended.

Of his work what shall I say ? Believing, as I do, that words about pictures are best left to writers who discover on the painter's canvas material with which to exercise their literary imagination, and thus create another work of beauty ; and lacking this gift myself, it would prove dull to write of Julian Ashton's work as I should write, telling you of a hue or brushwork, the skilful balancing of light and dark or some such technicality. Yet I shall risk tediousness in telling you of a little water-colour of his in the water-colour room at our National Gallery.

This work gives me pleasure. It is a picture of a lady with a parasol and was painted many years ago. One feels the painter's delight in his subject and there is no fiddling with the medium ; the colours are clear and bright. I like the blacks best. The black of the lady's cloak is a brilliant hue ; the fun is in the figure. When I look at the graduated washes that have become popular of late, I cannot help feeling that Julian Ashton's little lady deserves more admiration than she gets.

There was another little picture that he showed me lately. It was a wee portrait of a baby, painted in oils. The joyousness of the work infected me, and I do not know in what way pictures can be more admirable. The colour was charming, and one felt how pleased the painter must have been when he painted it.

When his sight grew dimmed and to see detail, as in these two little pictures, beyond the strength of any but clear, strong eyes, Julian Ashton painted colour—beautiful blues and pearly tints in simply-arranged harmonies. There was youthful vision in the beauty of these pictures and we said to ourselves : " Father Ashton does not grow old."

Julian Ashton is " Father " Ashton to a very large family of artists. I do not know how many other folk in Australia and abroad think of him as " Father " Ashton, but I believe they outnumber the fingers and toes of a regiment. From him flows, as from a paternal fount, inexhaustible sympathy and understanding for all who have feeling for the beautiful. And when the seeker

after new paths falls by the wayside and is ridiculed by his fellows, "Father" Ashton comes to his aid, restores enthusiasm in the flagging heart, re-kindles faith in beauty; and the stricken rise up and go on with the search, strengthened by this indefatigable leader.

Willy-nilly, my thoughts hark back to the man. This is not strange, for I know better painters, but no man whom I venerate more than he. When I returned to Sydney about ten years ago, I was appalled at the apathy towards art exhibited in a city as large and prosperous as Sydney. Amidst this apathy, Julian Ashton seemed to me like a light in the darkness towards which one gravitated, sure of finding understanding. He preserved that attitude towards art which one took for granted amongst artists in Europe. I had not met him before, but had heard high praise of him from Australian painters in London, who regarded him with affection and universal admiration; and his personality brightened their memories of Sydney.

I shall never forget the courage and steadfastness of the man forsaken in the fight by painters, who fled from Sydney as from a pestilence. You will never know, dear Reader, what perishing droughts art has survived in this once parched ground; and it is to the everlasting honour of Julian Ashton, more than to any other man, that art has persisted and increased and multiplied her followers.

The turning point was, I think, Blamire Young's exhibition at David Jones'. When the show hung fire and, once again, apathy seemed settled like an impenetrable fog and Sydney's foul name amongst artists abroad looked well deserved, Julian Ashton came to the rescue. His letter in the *Daily Telegraph* awakened interest and people came and saw and were delighted.

That is ancient history now and Sydney has become the first city in the Commonwealth in her patronage of art in Australia. Her name is respected where formerly it was despised, and artists begin to gather hither sure of their welcome.

Beneath the green dome of the markets, the beloved Teacher pauses not amidst these fruits of his toil. Yet if ever a man could contemplate his life's work and feel satisfied with what he has done, that man is Julian Ashton.



PLATE X

*Wet Day, George Street, Sydney.
Oil Painting.*

JULIAN ASHTON

BY CHRIS. BRENNAN

ONE gladly responds to the call to help in honouring Julian Ashton, for the honour falls rather on each and every who is summoned to this *eranos*; and again it is but just and fitting that one so widely known and beloved should receive homage from outside the hallowed circle of his fellow artists. Only, therewith it is made harder for those others, for us who are not of his guild. The more one has practised his own craft, the more one has come to respect its mystery and its infinite research, the less will he seek to thrust his word in where others have won their right to be heard. And thus, as Julian Ashton's art and activity as an art teacher are pre-empted topics, there is nothing left but that personal appreciation which, if it is not kept brief, is in danger of becoming an impertinence, and an embarrassing affair for its subject.

It has been my good fortune to meet Julian Ashton under the best conditions, where men can speak freely, at ease and at length, of the interesting things in life. We admired and respected him as our senior in achievement: we marvelled at him and loved him, as the youngest among us, for such I have often heard others call him when the session was over and the groups of two and three were on their way homewards. And, indeed, not even the youngest could have evidenced an interest, so quietly alert, so watchfully absorbed, and so readily appreciative, in all that was discussed. Always quick to intervene at the right moment and to the true effect, he warned the trespasser back to his permitted range when there was danger that his own beloved art might be approached without due reverence: "*Ne touchez pas à la reine!*" But most one thinks of his large tolerance and his unselfish delight in any good thing said by another: the genial light on his face as he listened and the rich amusement of his laugh at anything a little temperamental or exaggerated. There are so few of us that have it that one must love it utterly when one sees it: this generous and bountiful sympathy of a fine mind and spirit. In the world of art and letters it is surely the rarest and most precious thing, the finest guerdon, as it is the surest incentive, of all good work.

What Julian Ashton is in company that he has been in all his career. For that reason I have presumed to give this little glimpse of him, for that reason we are gathered to do him honour—that he has always given of himself. It is, perhaps, a futile bit of wool-gathering, but I cannot help thinking how much better they order these things in other countries, where the artist is duly recognized. Not that it is necessary or always innocuous for art that official cognisance be taken of it. But when one thinks of the fine democratic medium in which we breathe and live, where the wisdom and experience of the best is “only one man’s opinion,” and in art each one “knows what he likes,” one would not be sorry to see the intellectual *vulgus* constrained to some wholesome respect of what they do not understand. But—“in a young country like this”: the country and myself have not been getting any younger all this while that I have been listening to the elderly making that solemn excuse for postponing the things of the spirit. As if they were doing anything else than mumble the dregs of a particularly vulgar episode of human experience. But, it is Julian Ashton of whom I was to speak: if to do is great and to be yet finer, then Julian Ashton may be well content with what he is and what he has done, with the affection of all who know him and the admiration of all who can understand.



PLATE XI.

The Crevice.
Oil Painting.
In the possession of
Leslie Board, Esq.

JULIAN ASHTON

BY LIONEL LINDSAY

NO Englishman has so easily and completely identified himself with Australia as Julian Ashton. This is due, I think, to his love of this country and his inherent wisdom—a rare ability to find the good in things about him, with never a wish to superimpose a point of view.

Personal in his own art, Julian Ashton possesses a true artistic disinterestedness. He is just as interested in what the other fellow may be doing and as eager to comprehend another's point of view.

This has made him a great teacher. It has also added breadth and depth to a fine mind; sweetened the world for him, and left a lasting impression on all who have known him intimately.

Gautier's well-loved couplet ever upon his lips—"the coin outlasts the throne, the bust Tiberius"; his belief that Art is the one enduring monument to man's dignity has sustained him like a faith. Year in year out he has championed her cause with ready pen and aptly spoken word, maintaining the necessity of encouraging the native-born artist. His quick eye discerned the qualities of Streeton and Conder and the promise of Hilder. His advocacy helped their recognition. With astonishing insight he has never made a false artistic prophecy—all his swans have been swans.

Julian Ashton is a well-known Sydney identity. A strong, white-haired, ruddy-faced man, he still has the stride of youth, and his eye the keen light of youth and enthusiasm. There is something military in his appearance, and I have always fancied a resemblance to Sir Garnet Wolsey. In summer he dresses in white linen, and in winter wears that veteran landscape painter's comfort, a Norfolk jacket. There is something jaunty about him in the street, and when he meets a friend and exchanges the humour of the moment, the whole man lights up in appreciation of the story or the quip or the "touch" of character. Few men are able to crowd into a long day so much energy and interest as Julian Ashton. An early riser, he bathes in the sea all the year round, cultivates his vegetable patch and tends his poultry (for he

is a bit of a fancier), and frequently paints before breakfast. He is in his studio and teaching by ten o'clock; finds time to do original work in portraiture and landscape; and if a dinner (Ashton is a remarkably good after-dinner speaker) or gathering of wits claims his time, he will be among the last to leave. He was, until affected by asthma, what the French call a veritable man of steel.

His earliest recollection goes back to a big square Georgian house in Gulval, a suburb of Penzance—the most westerly town in England—where his father had settled. “My father had lived for a long while in Italy,” he writes me, “where he had married an Italian lady. I was the eldest of five, having two brothers and two sisters. It is curious that among so many memories of the place, one connected with Australia, which was to be my future home, produced a lasting effect. A large property in the neighbourhood had been rented by a man who roused the curiosity and awe of the villagers by his strange actions and attire. My father was a great walker, and I sometimes accompanied him, trailing at a distance behind his long strides. On one of these walks in the gloaming the wild man was seen coming towards us. I rushed to my father and clung to his hand. To my astonishment both men stopped and began to talk. As I peered round my father at this long-limbed, bearded man who was relating some of his experiences in Australia—where he had a station, though an Englishman by birth—I peopled the country of my adoption with a race of half-clad giants, who roamed to and fro swinging as they went great, curly walking sticks.”

When he was thirteen years old his father died, and his mother, who had become financially embarrassed through the defalcation of a banker, brought her family up to London. By the good offices of a friend of his father's, young Ashton was placed in the civil engineering branch of the Great Western Railway. He hated the work, and devoted his spare time to drawing, a taste he probably inherited from his father, who had spent many years on the Continent in the study of art. For some five years he was a student at the West London School of Art—a branch of South Kensington—and had already contributed drawings to several periodicals. He drew for *Cassell's Magazine*, *Chatterbox*, *Sunday at Home*, and the *British Workman*, and when he had saved enough money went to Paris for a term.



PLATE XII.

Paddling.
Oil Painting.
In the possession of
Miss Maude Haydon.

The Ecole des Beaux Arts then admitted any student to free tuition whose drawing was up to the required standard. The natural consequence of this was that the most brilliant draughtsmen from everywhere else ousted all but their equals amongst the French students from the coveted privilege of a free ticket. To nullify the foreign students' ability a language test was instituted somewhat similar to that in use here against undesirable aliens, and the Frenchman reigned supreme in the national school. The foreign art student was now in a fine pickle, for he could not afford the expensive fees of the private master, and he had not enough capital generally to work out a lonely salvation.

Luckily for the world, the man and the hour generally arrive together. A Provencal named Julien, who had been massier at the Beaux Arts, saw his chance and took it. He rented a barn-like structure near the national school, installed a dais, engaged a model and painted *Academie Julien* above his doors. "Here you are, gentlemen," he said, "a good light, a model, and easy fees. What more do you want?" The Academie Julien was filled in a week, and Julian Ashton was amongst the first of the polyglots to throng about the model, the first row squatting on the floor, the next on stools, and the outsiders standing—for space was limited and precious. Once a fortnight they had a change of models, and the election of the presiding deity of the next fourteen days was characterized by more vociferation than greets the winning M.P.

Ashton was loath to leave Paris, but necessity brought him back to London. He exhibited in various exhibitions, still continuing his black and white work, upon which a young painter has generally to depend for a livelihood. He got small works into the Royal Academy. "I shall not easily forget," he writes, "one particular varnishing day when I was successful in having a fairly large picture hung on the line. It was the custom in Paris to sign one's work in large Roman capitals, and as I stood before it the President, Sir Frederick Leighton, accompanied by Mr. Val Prinsep, came up. Be sure I was all agog to hear what they said. Both looked at my picture for a moment, when Prinsep, stepping towards it spelt out the name, and turning said, 'By Jove, Leighton, these young cocks spell their names pretty large!'"

About this time Ashton married, and his health being not very good, his doctor advised a sea voyage. Chancing upon an advertisement for an artist required in Melbourne, he answered it, and was requested to call upon Mr. David Syme. The result of that interview brought him to Melbourne in 1878. "I never liked Melbourne, from the day I landed till I left it to come to Sydney on a visit before returning to England. I was charmed with Sydney from the first day I spent in it, and accepted an offer of a three years' engagement from the *Picturesque Atlas* to travel over Australia on its behalf. By the end of that three years I had become so attached to New South Wales that I have never felt any desire to leave it."

Since then the influence of Julian Ashton upon the art of New South Wales has been all for its health and progress. Appointed by Sir Henry Parkes a trustee of the National Gallery, for twelve years he fought the battle of the Australian artist; and it is due to his continuous insistence upon the quality and claims of our own painters that they are at all represented in the National Gallery to-day. The acquisition of Streeton's beautiful pastoral, "Still Glides the Stream, and Shall For Ever Glide," is characteristic of Ashton's insistency.

Ashton had painted portraits (two of his finest are the Parkes in the National Gallery, and the full length of Archbishop Kelly), land- and sea-scapes, and he has painted in water-colour with masterly simplicity and directness. His early work was inclined to be hard, but with the years his vision has broadened; and he succeeds in developing a unity of effect which gives his work that sober dignity which characterises it. As a teacher he has no equal in New South Wales. He has the rare gift of lucidity; he likes teaching, and he has a genuine sympathy for the struggles of the neophyte. Drawing is like climbing mountains. There is no direct path to the peak. The student is intermittently faced by impasse and ravine. How to get across is a recurring problem. Genius will always win out a way; but the guide who knows all the tracks will save him much wandering—that was Phil May's opinion.

Mahony, Long and Lambert all studied under Julian Ashton; and Lambert, Australia's finest painter of the figure, paid his old master the compliment of saying there was no better teacher in Paris.



PLATE XIII.

J. R. Ashton.
Oil Painting, 1917.
By Mildred Lovett.

JULIAN ROSSI ASHTON

BY C. LLOYD JONES

But only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame ;
And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame ;
But each for the joy of the working, and each in his separate star,
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It, for the god of Things as they are.

KIPLING.

ARTIST, Teacher, Prophet ; no one man has had a greater influence on Art in New South Wales than Julian Ashton. He is always to be found with the progressives ; his influence has helped to form the minds of nearly all our notable artists. Lambert, Long, Grüner, Mahony and others graduated from his studio.

Julian Ashton is no mystic ; he believes that a copper pot well painted is better than an archangel badly painted. He believes in painting the things as we see them ; his Art is stamped with sincerity. In the many years he has been working it has passed through many phases, from the detailed, late Victorian method to the broader and more temperamental ideas of the modern French school.

English by birth, Australian by adoption, he has for many years been associated with all the best movements in art in this State. Julian Ashton, the man, is a familiar and genial figure to many of us. Lionel Lindsay once wrote of him, "Much as I have always admired his characteristic art, I have always felt that the personality of Julian Ashton overtopped it. The first to uphold his belief and long-considered opinions, the first to recognise merit and encourage it, he has ever gone the way of his personality, directly, unswervingly, honestly. A generous friend, a fine enemy."



Sketches in Colour.

*(J. R. Ashton at lower right corner,
Livingston Hopkins on the left).
By Phil May.*



W. T. Smedley
Sep 22. 1882



PLATE XVI.

J. R. Ashton.
Pencil Sketch.
By George W. Lambert.



PLATE XVII.

*The First Landscape
painted out of doors
in Australia, 1882.*

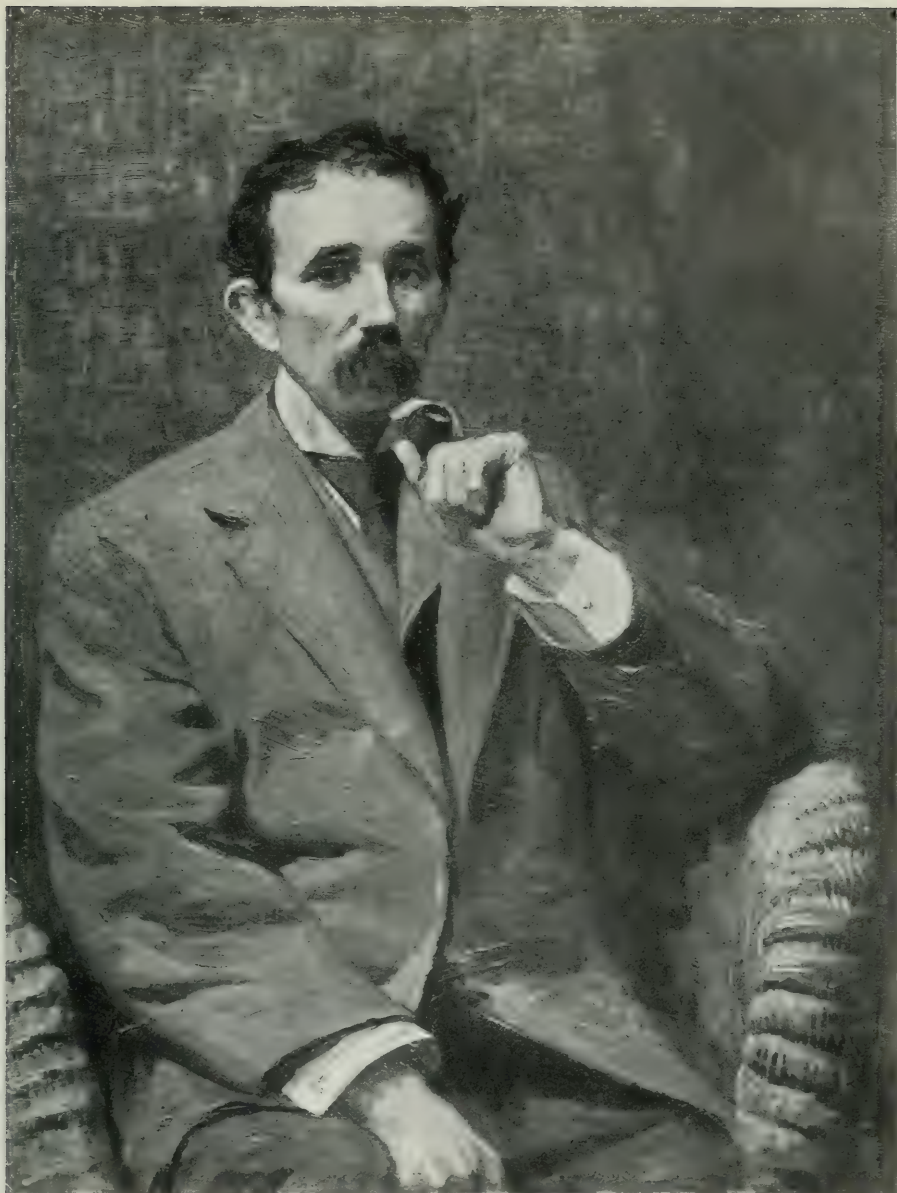


PLATE XVIII.

*Professor R. F. Irvine.
(About 1899).*



PLATE XIX.

The Mountain Side.
Oil Painting.



PLATE XX.

The Promise.
Oil Painting, 1910.



PLATE XXI.

The Everlasting Hills.
Oil Painting.



PLATE XXII.

The Fig Tree.
Oil Painting.



PLATE XXIII.

St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.
Watercolour, 1905.



PLATE XXIV.

Mangrove Creek, Hawkesbury River





PLATE XXVI.

*The Hon. J. C. Watson,
First Labour Prime Minister
of Australia.
Oil Painting, 1913.*



PLATE XXVII.

*Livingston Hopkins, Esq.
("Hop.")
Watercolour, 1908.*



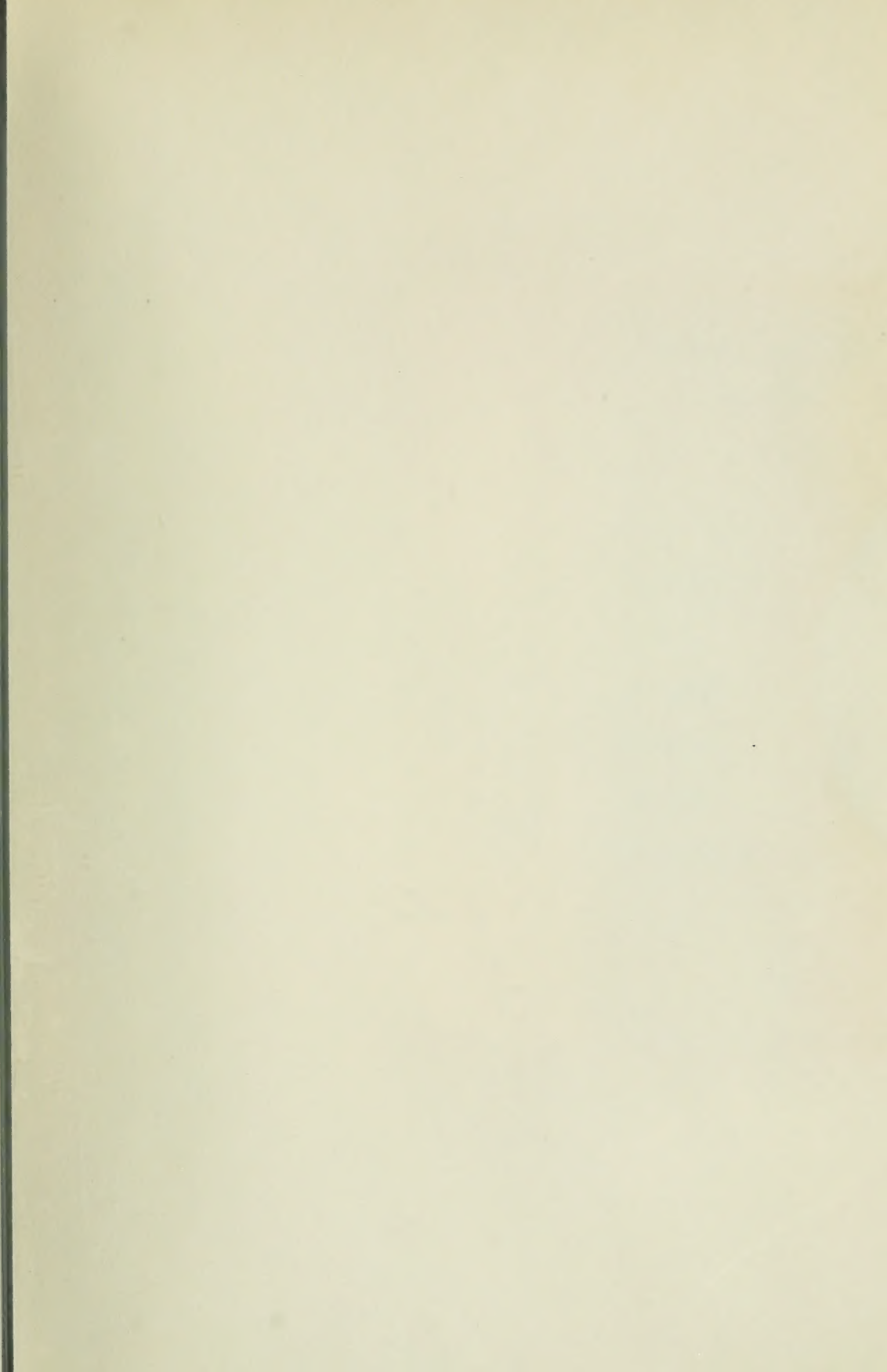
PLATE XXVIII.

Mist on the Creek.
Oil Painting.
Exhibited at Royal Academy,
London, 1911.

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The net profits of the book are to be handed to Mr. Julian Ashton.



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